

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 767

CS 209 680

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TITLE The Effect of Audience Specification on Writing Anxiety, Performance, and Sensitivity to Audience.
PUB DATE [85]
NOTE 34p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Anxiety; Comparative Analysis; Higher Education; *Performance Factors; *Student Reaction; *Writing Apprehension; Writing Exercises; *Writing Research; *Writing Skills

IDENTIFIERS . *Audience Awareness; *Audience Specification

ABSTRACT

One hundred seventy-nine students enrolled in a first-year college level composition course were subjects in a study of the effects of four levels of audience specification on writing anxiety, performance, and sensitivity to audience. Subjects completed the Writing Apprehension Test, which determined levels of writing apprehension, and then responded to one of four writing tasks that provided different amounts of audience information: assignment 1 made no reference to audience; assignment 2 included a statement that reminded subjects that they were to address an audience but did not specify the audience; assignment 3 specified the receptiveness, level of comprehension, and prior knowledge of the audience; and assignment 4 specified the characteristics given in assignment 3 and indicated that a response would be received from the audience. Subjects also completed the Situational Writing Anxiety Test and an audience questionnaire. Among the findings were the following: (1) high apprehensives who received assignment 2 were less anxious than those who received assignment 4, (2) moderately apprehensive writers produced better essays in response to assignment 3 than they did to any of the other assignments, and (3) assignments 2 and 4 were more likely to sensitize writers to audience and to influence them to consider a variety of readers. (HOD)

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THE EFFECT OF AUDIENCE SPECIFICATION
ON
WRITING ANXIETY, PERFORMANCE, AND SENSITIVITY TO AUDIENCE

By

Rhynette N. Hurd

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This study investigated the effect of audience on writing anxiety, performance, and sensitivity to audience. After the Writing Apprehension Test was administered to determine levels of dispositional writing apprehension, subjects responded to one of four writing tasks which provided different amounts of audience information. Subjects completed the Situational Writing Anxiety Test and an audience questionnaire. Essays were scored holistically. The results of all measures were analyzed to determine what relationships existed among the four variables and among the high-, low-, and moderately apprehensive subgroups.

The study found that high apprehensives who received Assignment 2 were less anxious than those who received Assignment 4. The anxiety of the other subjects was not affected by treatment. Though the study revealed no significant differences in text quality among the four low-apprehensive treatment groups, moderately apprehensive writers produced better essays in response to Assignment 3 than they did to either of the other assignments. Assignment 3 essays, for high apprehensives, were significantly better than Assignment 4 essays. The audience survey revealed that assignments 2 and 4 were more likely to sensitize writers to audience and to influence them to consider a variety of readers. Furthermore, high apprehensives were more likely than other subjects to consider the teacher as their only audience and to be concerned about their readers' evaluation of their texts which they believed depended on lexical, mechanical, and scribal matters as opposed to global ones.

THE EFFECT OF AUDIENCE SPECIFICATION ON WRITING ANXIETY,
PERFORMANCE, AND SENSITIVITY TO AUDIENCE

(Based on research completed in December 1985 for the PhD
from George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University)

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The Effect of Audience Specification on Writing Anxiety,
Performance, and Sensitivity to Audience

According to Carol Berkenkotter, "one of the major difficulties most [teachers] face is helping student writers write for a responsive audience other than the teacher-evaluator" ("Student Writers" 312). Besides the problem of always having too many papers to grade, perhaps the two most common complaints of composition instructors have been that many of their students dread every writing assignment and many, when they do write, produce inexplicit texts, apparently addressed to no one. The findings of such researchers as Atlas (1980), Fox (1980), and Paquette (1981) suggest that perhaps one factor which impacts on both of these problems is that students perceive classroom assignments as mere exercises which mean nothing but a score in the teacher's gradebook.

For all writers, the audience is unseen and somewhat elusive, but student writers, as Gordon Brossell suggests, must "make a leap of imagination" to reconcile both the actual and fictional contexts from which they write (170). They must pretend that indeed there is a "constructive participant" (Kroll, "Writing for Readers" 181) who has interest in what they are saying. Considering all the constraints a writer must handle, the task is difficult enough when there is a real problem to be addressed to a real audience. Compositions written for classroom assignments require students to engage in such a struggle when one

rhetical context is just a pretense and the other reminds students that the writing task has as one of its goals evaluating them on how well they can pretend.

Because of the many constraints, some students suffer from what Mike Rose calls an "immobilizing writer's block" which can result in "a growing distrust of their abilities and an aversion toward the composing process itself" ("Rigid Rules" 389). In a 1983 article, Rose suggests that many composition courses do not meet students' needs, do not "incorporate issues of writer's intention and the actual playing out of that intention in the process of composing an essay, nor do they take account of writer's relation to audience in any full way" ("Remedial Writing Courses" 116). Such courses fail to consider precisely those aspects of writing that students are expected to realize as they write.

In "On Audience and Composition," Lisa S. Ede agrees that the classroom writing situation is far from ideal. She does, however, offer some suggestions for easing the effects of the artificiality. She contends:

Ideally, our students would write because they want to, need to. We cannot alter the artificiality of the classroom, but we can help students create contexts that will more closely approximate later writing situations. . . . The teacher can provide the context and audience for the students, or the teacher can stimulate students to create them for themselves. (294)

Other teachers, theorists, and researchers, including Kroll (1978), Tedlock (1981), Paquette (1981), Berkenkotter (1982),

and Kollar and Monroe (1984), attest to the importance of creating an enabling context for composing. In light of the rhetorical components needed to provide an exigency for composing, programs which attempt to approximate nonacademic writing situations appear to be at least taking a step in the right direction. Students need to be able to reach beyond the teacher as audience; they need to believe that what they have to say will make a difference; and they need to believe that they can present a persona that is credible.

Strategies which alter the writing context inherent in the classroom to approximate a real-world writing situation have as their goal providing an enabling context from which students can compose. The case approach as described by David Tedlock (1981) and the techniques commonly used in business and legal writing courses have been found to be effective in motivating students by establishing a meaningful rhetorical context which offers guidance for developing purpose, sense of audience, and an appropriate voice. Tedlock contends that "the case approach makes the need to write seem real, emphasizes problem-solving and the writing process, and provides students with a clear sense of audience" (253). He suggests that with the pragmatic students of the eighties and the call by researchers for more attention to invention and audience, the case approach seems to be the logical choice for innovative techniques in composition instruction.

Such strategies, however, need to be carefully studied

for their actual effect on student performance. As Richard Beach and Lillian S. Bridwell have observed:

While adding at least a hypothetical audience for a piece of writing sounds like an improvement, there is some evidence to suggest that specifying a fictitious audience may be counterproductive, detracting from overall writing quality. (225)

They go on to suggest that "giving an assigned topic with a stipulated purpose and audience may limit a writer's potential response to the assignment, as does leaving the context undefined" (226). They cite Brossell's test essay study which examined the effect of full rhetorical specification, that is, giving assignments which explicitly state purpose, subject, audience, and persona for students, on writing performance. The study indicates that such practices may hinder writers, keeping them from attending to strategies which facilitate the composing process. Brossell found that a lower level of specification, one that omitted information about purpose, audience, and speaker, resulted in longer and better test essays. Full rhetorical specification, it appears, may inhibit production because it suggests that writers juggle all constraints at once.

Brossell's research, however, focused on a testing situation and examined the effect of a combination of specified rhetorical components. Research is therefore needed to determine how different levels of specification of each of the components singularly affect performance on writing assignments for composition classes. Kroll suggests that "because the ability to adapt writing for an audience is so

fundamental to successful communication, the development of students' audience-adapted writing skills surely merits more sophisticated, searching, and analytic investigations" ("Rewriting a Complex Story" 157). Beach and Bridwell lend support for such research when they write:

While both classical and contemporary theories include discussions of the relationship between writer and audience, and the cognitive processing research gives these theories empirical support, there is very little focused research on how writers' inferring of audience characteristics affects either texts or the production of them. (225-26)

Furthermore, they suggest that one possible effect of audience considerations could be more or less anxiety about composing. They point to Roy F. Fox (1980) and to John A. Daly and Joy Lynn Hailey (1984) who indicate a need to study the ways in which audience influences apprehension and how apprehension influences composing behavior.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the effects of four levels of audience specification on the degree of situational anxiety reported by dispositionally high-, moderate-, and low-apprehensive writers, on the quality of their written discourse, and on the writers' sensitivity to audience. Unlike dispositional apprehension, a person-specific and enduring trait, situational anxiety is transitory and surfaces only under particular conditions. By manipulating the amount of audience information given to student writers and thereby altering a situational variable, the investi-

gation attempted to discover the role audience plays in establishing the writer's attitude toward composing, in determining the writer's approach, and, consequently, in shaping the writer's text.

Hypotheses

This study proceeded under the hypothesis that varying the level of audience specification would produce no significant difference in the amount of writing anxiety, in the quality of the product of student writers, nor in the level of sensitivity to audience. Eight specific hypotheses were tested:

1. The amount of anxiety of dispositionally high-apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification.
2. The amount of anxiety of dispositionally low-apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification.
3. The amount of anxiety of moderately apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification.
4. The quality of the writing of dispositionally high-apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification.
5. The quality of the writing of dispositionally low-apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification.

6. The quality of the writing of moderately apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification.

7. Neither of the four writing conditions effects a significant difference between the performance of situationally low-anxious writers and situationally high-anxious writers.

8. The amount of audience information given in a writing assignment affects writers' perceptions of their sensitivity to audience.

Levels of Audience Specification

Four levels of specification were considered. Assignment 1 made no reference to audience; Assignment 2 included a statement which reminded subjects that they were to address an audience but did not specify a given audience; Assignment 3 specified the receptiveness, level of comprehension, and prior knowledge or expertise of the audience; and Assignment 4 specified the characteristics given in Assignment 3 and in addition indicated that a response would be received from the audience. Instead of full rhetorical specification, assignments 3 and 4 specified only subject and audience. Because the assignments placed different audience restrictions on the writers, each level of audience specification, it was assumed, would require the students to perform different cognitive activities to handle audience.

Measures of Apprehension and Audience

Two measures of apprehension were administered. One, the Daly and Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT, 1975), measures dispositional apprehension. Daly and Hailey define such apprehension toward writing as "highly person-specific; it ignores the situational characteristics that can affect how anxious an individual feels" (260). The WAT was given before the subjects wrote in order to assess their levels of dispositional apprehension. The other measure is a new instrument developed by Daly and Hailey (1984) and assesses to what degree writers are anxious about a particular writing assignment. The Situational Writing Anxiety Test (SWAT) was given after each subject completed the assigned writing task. Both measures were used because, as Daly and Hailey discovered, "dispositional writing apprehension and situational anxiety are not equivalent" (270), and the study sought to examine the effects of different writing situations on students with different levels of dispositional apprehension. Furthermore, in order to test the hypotheses, it was important to determine whether students were disposed to high, low, or moderate levels of writing anxiety or were reacting to a given situation.

In addition, Pfister and Petrick's Audience Questionnaire (1980) was administered after the writing assignments had been completed to discover the students' perception of their levels of sensitivity to audience. Marshall Atlas has found that some students, though they are given details

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concerning the audience, fail to make use of this knowledge (13). The Pfister and Petrick questionnaire indicated whether students were likely to be aware of the characteristics of their audience, and the students' texts indicated whether students could apply their awareness.

Holistic ratings were used to evaluate the papers on a scale of 1 to 6. Comparisons were made to determine the correlations between dispositional and situational anxiety levels and performance on assignments which required students to handle audience demands in different ways.

Participants in the Study

The subjects for the study were students enrolled in a first college-level composition course during the summer term of 1985. One hundred and sixty-one subjects were enrolled in English 1101 at Memphis State University, a large urban university with an enrollment of over 20,000 students. Eighteen additional subjects were participants in a summer program at the University of Tennessee Center for the Health Sciences (UTCHS) and were enrolled in their first college-level composition course.

Procedures for the Study

Writing apprehension levels for all subjects were determined by administering the WAT. Subjects scoring at least one standard deviation above the mean were classified as writers with high apprehension, those scoring at least one

standard deviation below the mean were classified as writers with low apprehension, and the remaining subjects were classified as moderately apprehensive writers. The subjects were randomly assigned to a writing task which specified one of the four audience conditions. A total of 28 high-apprehensive writers, 36 low-apprehensive writers, and 115 moderately apprehensive writers constituted subjects for this 12-cell design. The random distribution of writing tasks assured the comparability of essays from cell to cell.

After the writing assignment was completed, the subjects were given the Situational Writing Anxiety Test and the Audience Questionnaire to determine the degree of their writing anxiety and their perceptions of audience. The essays were graded by raters using the City University of New York (CUNY) system of holistic scoring. To determine the effect of audience on anxiety and performance, comparisons were made among subjects who were similarly apprehensive and completed different assignments and among writers at different levels of apprehension who completed the same assignment. Additionally, tabulations were made to compare, on the basis of audience conditions, the subjects' perceptions of their sensitivity to audience. After all essays were rated, the anxiety scores were computed and analyzed, and the answers on the questionnaire were quantified, descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically analysis of variance, were carried out to test the hypotheses.

The Effect of Audience on Anxiety

In order to investigate the influence of audience demands on writing anxiety, two measures of apprehension were considered. Scores on the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) were used to determine the pre-situational or dispositional levels of apprehension, and scores on the Situational Writing Anxiety Test (SWAT) were used to determine how anxious the subjects were about their particular writing assignments. In this regard, the results of the second measure are meaningful only in light of how predisposed the subjects were to writing apprehension; therefore, ratios and differences between WAT and SWAT scores were examined. Normality tests of overall SWAT and SWAT for each treatment group revealed normal distribution at the .01 level. Since the writing situations differed only in the amount of audience information, significant differences in the amount of attitude change among the treatment groups, if any, could reasonably be attributed to the audience requirements specified in the assignments.

The administration of the Situational Writing Anxiety Test resulted in an overall mean of 44.74 with a standard deviation of 12.34. The mean for dispositionally high apprehensives was 56.54, for moderately apprehensive writers 45.15, and for low apprehensives 34.27. Because the WAT and SWAT do not have the same scale, these SWAT means are not readily comparable to means on the dispositional writing

apprehension test; therefore, adjusted scores were obtained by computing percentile scores for both WAT and SWAT. These adjusted scores on both measures more clearly lend themselves to comparison. The adjusted WAT and SWAT means suggest that after the subjects responded to an actual writing assignment, though overall only slight decreases in anxiety were observed, high apprehensive writers manifested a substantial decrease.

To calculate individual increases and decreases, scores of apprehension and anxiety were divided into six categories so that changes within the large group of moderately apprehensive subjects could be detected. Dispositionally high apprehensives (subjects who scored at least one standard deviation above the mean on the WAT) were placed into one category, low apprehensives (subjects who scored at least one standard deviation below the mean) were placed into one category, and moderately apprehensives were placed into one of four categories determined by one-half standard deviations from the mean. The results of the SWAT were similarly categorized, and changes from one WAT category to a different SWAT category were analyzed.

Increases and Decreases in Writing Anxiety

On the basis of the six-level model (with four moderate levels), sixty-seven subjects exhibited increased levels of anxiety, and sixty exhibited decreased levels of anxiety,

with twenty-three increasing by more than one level and thirty decreasing by more than one level.

An analysis by audience level reveals that subjects who completed Assignment 1, with no audience cues, were more likely than other subjects to exhibit increased anxiety and were less likely to exhibit decreased anxiety. Assignment 2, which merely reminded students to consider audience, on the other hand, appears to have influenced fewer subjects to increase anxiety and more subjects to decrease anxiety. Assignments 3 and 4, which specified an audience of network program directors, appear to have had similar effects on the anxiety of the subjects.

In order of their apparent favorable influence on attitudes toward writing for the overall sample, the assignments can be ranked in the following manner: Assignment 2, Assignment 4, Assignment 3, and, last, Assignment 1. Assignment 2 appears to have influenced less than one-third of the subjects (30.4%) who received it to exhibit increased anxiety, and Assignment 1 appears to have influenced over one-half of the subjects (52.9%) who received it to increase anxiety.

Analysis was also made to determine changes in anxiety within apprehension subgroups by calculating differences in means. Table 1 charts the results of this analysis.

TABLE 1
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SWAT AND WAT GROUP MEANS
(SWAT - WAT)

	1	Assignment		4	Total
		2	3		
High	-11.33	-14.76	-6.58	+1.05	-8.89
Moderates	+2.13	-3.94	-2.19	-4.61	-2.77
Low	+3.49	+3.01	+3.75	+3.19	+3.32

An examination of Table 1 reveals that for low apprehensives, all assignments had substantively the same effect. An analysis of variance resulted in no main effect of treatment for low apprehensives ($F=.0046$; $df=3,32$). For significance at the .10 level, an F value of at least 2.23 was needed. This finding did not allow for the rejection of the null hypothesis, Hypothesis 2. The study suggests that the amount of anxiety of low-apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in levels of audience specification.

Table 1 indicates that for moderately apprehensive writers, Assignment 1, a task that made no mention of audience, was the only assignment to increase anxiety and that the largest decrease was observed with Assignment 4; however, an analysis of variance of moderately apprehensive differences in means for Assignments 1 and 4, the two assignments with the largest differences, only approached significance. The resulting F statistic of 2.26 was less than the critical value of 2.79 required at the .10 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Hypothesis

3)--the amount of anxiety of moderately apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification--was not rejected.

Based on Table 1, treatment appears to have influenced significant differences among the high apprehensive writers. Considerable differences are apparent between group means for assignments 1 and 4 and 2 and 4. Only the latter combination, however, yielded a significant difference. An analysis of variance revealed statistically significant differences in the amount of situational anxiety between high apprehensives who wrote Assignment 2 and those who wrote Assignment 4 ($F[.05 < p < .10] = 4.0357$; $df = 1, 9$). This finding suggests that Hypothesis 1--the amount of anxiety of high-apprehensive writers is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification--should be rejected. High apprehensive writers exhibited significantly less anxiety when they were merely given a reminder about audience and, therefore, were allowed to choose their own audiences. The high apprehensive subjects, who according to Selfe (1984) are less likely than low apprehensives to respond to audience cues, were more comfortable with creating their own audiences than they were with full audience specification and anticipation of feedback.

The Effect of Audience on Performance

The administration of the writing tasks was controlled across conditions for topic, time allowed for completion, and

method of administration. The only distinction among the assignments was the amount of audience information given in the assignment. The assignments were rated using a six-point rating scale. Calculations resulted in an overall mean of 3.55, with high apprehensives averaging 3.3, moderates averaging 3.54, and low apprehensives averaging 3.71. These figures reveal that the performance of the subjects was inversely related to the level of writing apprehension. A normality test of essay scores for treatment groups and for the overall sample revealed that the scores were not quite normally distributed; however, the average scores do represent typical performance by entering college freshmen. In fact, the observed overall average of 3.55 approximates the midpoint of 3.5 for the rating scale.

Apprehension-level Analysis

Comparisons were made among subjects within apprehension-level subgroups to determine whether their performance was affected by the audience conditions. Tests of significance were run at the .05 level.

A Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance revealed that for the total sample, with all treatments considered, differences in essay mean scores approached significance at the .10 level. In order to detect whether any combination of treatments produced significant differences in means, a series of paired analyses of variance between treatment groups and analyses of variance for each apprehension-level

subgroup were carried out. This procedure revealed significant differences in essay score means for assignments 2 and 3 and for all moderately apprehensive subjects.

Further analysis detected no significant difference for treatment among the low-apprehensive writers. Only an analysis of treatments 1 and 4 for low apprehensives even approached significance. Based on this finding, no evidence was given to reject the null hypothesis, Hypothesis 5. The study suggests that the quality of the essays of writers low in apprehension is not significantly affected by differences in the level of audience specification.

An analysis of variance of the difference in means of high-apprehensive writers revealed a significant difference between high apprehensives who wrote Assignment 2 and those who wrote Assignment 3 (H corrected [$.025 < p < .05$] = 4.42; $df=1$). This finding supports a rejection of Hypothesis 4 and indicates that the level of audience specification does effect the performance of high-apprehensive writers. High apprehensives wrote better essays when they were asked to imagine a specific audience than they wrote when they were merely reminded to consider audience.

For the moderately apprehensive subjects, performance on Assignment 3 was shown to be significantly higher than performance on any of the other writing tasks. Paired analyses of means for assignments 1 and 3 yielded a corrected H value of 4.6615, for assignments 2 and 3 a corrected H of 4.6886, and for 4 and 3 a corrected H of 4.5153. Each of these

values is significant at the .05 level. Based on these findings, Hypothesis 6 was rejected. The quality of the writing of moderately apprehensive writers can be affected by the amount of audience specification given in an assignment. The moderately apprehensive subjects performed significantly better when they were asked to imagine a specific audience than they did when they were given no audience cues, when they were merely reminded of audience, and when they were told that they, in fact, were writing to an actual audience.

To test whether audience specification effected significant differences in performance between situationally high-anxious writers and situationally low-anxious writers, subjects were categorized according to their scores on the Situational Writing Anxiety Test. An analysis of variance of overall high-anxious performance and low-anxious performance revealed no significant difference between the two subgroups. Further analysis revealed no significant difference between high-anxious and low-anxious writers' performance on either of the assignments; therefore, no evidence indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis, Hypothesis 7. The level of audience specification does not influence differences between high- and low-anxious writers.

An overall view of these findings suggests that audience information affects the performance of high- and moderately apprehensive writers but not that of low apprehensives. High apprehensives who completed Assignment 3 wrote better essays than high apprehensives who completed Assignment 2.

Assignment 3 was shown to be the most likely assignment to produce higher quality essays for moderately apprehensive subjects. Audience specification, then, was a significant factor in determining the quality of writing for the majority of the subjects in the study. Only the low-apprehensive subjects exhibited no significant differences in performance as a result of the level of audience specification.

The Effect of Audience on Sensitivity

The Pfister and Petrick Audience Questionnaire (1980), a seven-item, self-report survey, provides information on the degree and nature of writers' sensitivity to audience. As measured by the questionnaire scores, subjects who received Assignment 2, those who were merely reminded to think of audience, were more aware of the importance of audience than were the other subjects. They received the highest score (80.4%), followed by treatment group 4 with 78.4%, treatment group 3 with 74.07%, and treatment group 1 with 69.6% of the total points possible for their subgroups. Subjects who wrote assignments 2 and 4 were also more likely to admit that they actually considered audience whenever they wrote. The responses to question two indicated that 72.3% of treatment group 4 and 65.22% of treatment group 2 reported that they always consider the audience. Only 58.82% of the subjects who wrote Assignment 1 and 55.6% of those who wrote Assignment 3 said that they always think of their readers. Based on these findings, if indeed the assignment influenced

the level of audience awareness, a mere reminder to consider audience was more effective in stressing the importance of audience consideration than was providing an actual audience, having subjects to assume a specific audience, or not mentioning audience at all. Telling subjects that they were writing to a real audience, however, seemed to have encouraged them to admit that they actually consider audience when they write. Assignments 2 and 4, then, were more likely to enhance audience sensitivity.

Five reasons were given for not considering the reader during the writing process. The largest number of negative responses, 44.6%, indicated that the subjects did not deem it necessary to think of the reader when they are recording their personal thoughts and feelings. Many of these subjects indicated that they would write what they wrote regardless of who might read their text and regardless of what the reader thought of the text. They suggested that by considering audience they would run the risk of distorting their own views, and, for the most part, they focused on whether it was their responsibility to please an audience or to accurately express their own thoughts, opinions, and feelings. Though some offered apologies for not including an audience, many more were adamant about not sacrificing their own ideas and methods of expression for the sake of a demanding audience. Attention constraints resulting from becoming too involved in the content of the paper or in the manipulation of the language and mechanics prevented 26.2% of the subjects who

did not consider audience from attending to audience needs. These subjects suggested that they realized that consideration of audience would improve their texts, but they were not able to juggle the additional constraint as they struggled with such matters as grammar, mechanics, and organization.

Analysis of the apprehension-level subgroups revealed that attention constraints prevented more high-apprehensive subjects who did not always consider audience (40%) from attending to audience needs. This problem was mentioned by 37% of the moderately apprehensive subjects but by only one of the low apprehensives. For both the moderately apprehensive and low-apprehensive subjects, the most frequent response, 44.2% and 41.7% respectively, was that failure to consider audience was the result of trying to preserve personal expression.

In addition, treatment appears to have influenced the reasons subjects gave for not considering audience. As reasons for failure to think about audience, attention constraints and preserving personal expression were both mentioned by 42.9% of the subjects who received Assignment 1 and did not consider audience. For Assignment 2 subjects, 68.7% complained of attention constraints. For assignments 3 and 4, the most frequent response (60% and 53.3% respectively) was that the audience was ignored in an attempt to maintain personal expression.

Answers to question four, "Who do you usually identify

as the reader of your paper?," fell into nine categories. Interestingly, the largest number of respondents to question four specified the teacher as the only audience, and 64.1% included the teacher among those who are considered as audience. These percentages reveal that only 38.5% of all the subjects completing the survey did not usually consider the teacher as audience, and a fourth of those subjects did not consider audience at all. It should also be noted that 55.3% of all subjects, a total of 99 respondents, had just completed an assignment that specified an audience other than the teacher.

Half (49.6%) of the subjects who received assignments 1, 3, and 4 indicated that they usually thought of the teacher as the audience. However, nearly two-thirds (65.2%) of those who received Assignment 2 indicated that the teacher was the usual audience. This subgroup had simply been given a reminder in their assignment that they should decide on an audience and should keep that audience in mind as they wrote. Contrary to what might be expected in light of the above percentages, subjects who received Assignment 2 were also more likely than the other subjects to indicate that they consider an audience other than the teacher or themselves. Nine of these subjects named more than one audience and, with all responses considered, as compared to only 36.8% of the subjects who received assignments 1, 3, and 4, 50% of the subjects receiving Assignment 2 named separately or in addition to the teacher an audience of peers or readers who

were not their teachers. Apparently, the simple reminder to consider audience encouraged more subjects to be aware of more of the available options.

One would expect that if answers to question four were influenced by the assignment, subjects who received assignments 3 and 4 would name the teacher less often. In fact, 56% of those subjects who were given a specified audience indicated that they do not consider the teacher as the only audience, whereas only 52.9% of the other subjects did not consider the teacher as the only audience. The fact that 24 of the subjects who received assignments 3 and 4 asking them to consider television network program directors as their audience did not respond to question four of the survey suggests that only one-third of the subjects who were expected to answer this question were not influenced by the nature of their writing assignment. This result and the results of questions 1, 2, and 7 of the audience survey offer support for Hypothesis 7. They suggest that audience sensitivity is influenced by the amount of audience information given in a writing task.

Answers to question 5 reveal that one-third of the respondents deemed it important to consider what ideas the audience has on the subject of the text and what belief systems are held by the audience. This response was the most common one for the low and moderately apprehensive subjects. The second most frequently mentioned audience characteristic, the response given most often by the high apprehensives, was

the reader's basis for evaluating the text. The majority of the subjects who mentioned evaluation suggested that they would receive a grade based on what the reader had given as requirements. These respondents were apparently envisioning a classroom-generated assignment and were considering a teacher or evaluator as the audience. The remaining responses, including level of knowledge, age, and so forth, do indicate that subjects could envision an audience other than the teacher. Analysis of answers to question six reveals, however, that many students do not make full use of audience choices.

In answer to question six, subjects suggested seventeen aspects of their writing that are influenced by audience consideration and that they need to keep in mind to assure that the audience will appreciate their papers. Each of the qualities mentioned can be placed in one of four categories--content, style, structure, or mechanics. Those respondents who were concerned about keeping the interest of the audience, stating facts, and maintaining sincerity, 43.83% of the subjects who responded to question six, felt that the content should be considered to assure audience appreciation. These subjects were concerned about the accuracy, validity, and truthfulness of the ideas expressed in their papers and felt that what they wrote about and the details that they gave were influenced by the intended audience. Style, including clarity of expression, tone, originality, diction, and syntax, was the concern of 40.74% of the respondents.

They felt that consideration of the audience influenced the manner in which they expressed their ideas. Those respondents who made note of the importance of having a well-organized, coherent, and adequately long paper, 22.84%, believed that structure was important. They suggested that audience influenced the way they ordered, connected, and developed their ideas. Finally, 25.31% made special note of such mechanical matters as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and neatness. Apparently, for certain audiences, or perhaps for all audiences, these matters of correctness and appearance were a special concern.

Interestingly, though a third of the respondents recognized the importance of knowing the reader's opinions and values, none of them suggested that the reader's attitude toward the subject matter nor toward the writer could influence the choice of rhetorical mode or that the appropriate mode would affect the reader's judgment of the text. These subjects, therefore, are not likely to conceive of allowing audience concerns to serve as their informing principle but think of audience as an entity for whom they must tidy up their prose. For them, audience is something to consider as they decorate their text not as they design it.

Conclusions

This study found that though the anxiety levels of moderately and low-apprehensives were not affected by the amount of audience specification given in a writing task,

high apprehensives manifested less anxiety when they were given a simple cue to decide on their own audience and to keep the intended audience in mind as they wrote. This finding supports the notion of Janice N. Hays who suggests that for undergraduate writers, it is important to teach the concept of audience but the ideal audience is "an audience that they can define themselves within the assignment's broad parameters" (25). Apparently, restricting the choice of audience for high apprehensive writers serves to provide a constraint that produces additional stress, but a subtle reminder of audience enhances a more positive attitude toward the writing task.

Interestingly, high apprehensives wrote better essays when they were asked to imagine a specific audience than they did when they were led to believe that they were engaging in actual communication with a specific audience that had requested their opinions; however, their performance when they were given an audience to imagine was no better than their performance when they were allowed to create their own audience. These findings suggest that writing tasks for high apprehensives should, at least at the beginning stages, include some audience cues but, in order to reduce stress, should avoid references to a specific but unfamiliar audience that will reply.

Another finding of this study suggests that merely by having a writing experience, high apprehensives manifested substantially lower levels of anxiety. Perhaps their own

perceptions of their apprehension are exaggerated prior to an actual writing experience. For them, the idea of writing produces more stress than actually writing. This finding is supported by those theorists and researchers who suggest that many high-apprehensive college students are students who have had very limited opportunities to write, and increasing the number of their composing experiences will alone serve in some measure to decrease anxiety (Fox, 1980; Selfe, 1984).

Furthermore, the study found that dispositional apprehension does impact performance, but situational anxiety does not. Though these ideas appear to contradict each other, they could perhaps be understood in light of the fact that some anxiety about a writing task is necessary in order for a writer to complete the task, but fear of the whole notion of composing and communicating may preclude a writer's ever taking the task seriously enough to attend to the details of a successful text.

In addition, this study found that one aspect of the rhetorical situation, namely audience, does affect the degree of stress of high apprehensives and the performance of high and moderately apprehensive writers. Realizing that audience information influences anxiety and performance could lead to more carefully designed writing tasks that take the disposition of the writer into consideration. Though it is important to teach the concept of audience, assignments should be designed to facilitate the composing process, not to hamper it. Providing the audience cues which best fit the

skill and disposition of a particular writer could favorably affect the writers' success.

The results of the audience sensitivity survey indicated that the subjects of this study were not likely to conceive of audience as an informing principle for their writing. For the most part, audience was viewed as an entity outside of the text that the writer had to assess in order to avoid severe criticism or negative evaluation.

Furthermore, over half of the high apprehensive writers who admitted to thinking of audience when they wrote indicated that the teacher was their audience, whereas low apprehensives were more likely than the other subjects to consider other audiences including themselves and their peers. It is possible that one factor that contributes to higher apprehension is envisioning a teacher-evaluator as the only reader. If such is the case, teaching students to conceive of varied audiences whom they create for themselves is even more important.

As Brossell, Ede, Walzer and others have indicated, the concept of audience and its role in the composition classroom is a complex one. Undergraduates, whose primary motivation for writing is to complete the requirements for a course, whose purpose is to receive a passing grade, and whose subject is often predetermined, would certainly have difficulty handling the added constraint of audience as they attempt to meet the demands of composing.

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